

James Dwight Dana House
24 Hillhouse Avenue
New Haven
New Haven County
Connecticut

HABS No. CONN-273

HABS
CONN.

5-NEWHA

25-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
801 - 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

JAMES DWIGHT DANA HOUSE

HABS
CONN
5-NEWHA
25-

Location: 24 Hillhouse Avenue, southwest corner of Hillhouse Avenue and Trumbull Street, New Haven, New Haven County, Connecticut.

Present Owner: Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

Present Use: University Offices.

Statement of Significance: Noteworthy example of 19th century stuccoed brick town house with wooden portico of Hindu derivation. It was designed by Henry Austin for James Dwight Dana who was one of the leading scientists of the 19th century and one of Yale's most distinguished professors. He was the son-in-law of scientist and Yale Professor Benjamin Silliman and father of scientist and Yale Professor Edward Salisbury Dana. Sillimans and Danas have lived on Hillhouse Avenue for more than 100 years. The house was built in 1849 and remained in the Dana family until acquired by Yale University in 1962.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which structure is built. Reference is to New Haven County Lands Records, volume and page number.

February 4, 1831 Benjamin Silliman bought the land from James A. Hillhouse for \$500.00. Silliman made no improvements on the land.

September 16, 1848 Benjamin Silliman sold the land to James D. Dana for \$1,000. Vol. 128, p. 64.

January 1962 House and land were deeded to Yale University by the estate of William B. Dana for \$1.00. Vol. 2137, p. 149.

2. Date of erection: 1849.
3. Architect: Henry Austin, 1804-1891.

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Photographs of Austin's drawings taken from the originals in the Beinecke Rare Book Library at Yale University, are included in this report.
 5. Alterations and additions: Two additions, 1896 and 1905. A library addition replaced the porch on the west side. A wing was added to the north side which fronts on Trumbull Street. The flooring in the library, as well as the glass and ceiling work, indicate an early date for that addition, possibly as early as the house itself, thereby implying a change in the original plans.
 6. Important old views: Photocopy of Front (East) Elevation prior to addition of 1896 and photocopy of Front (East) Elevation undated.
- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:
- None.
- C. Sources of Information:
1. Primary and unpublished sources:

The New Haven Land Records, Land Records Office archives, Hall of Records, New Haven, Conn.

Arnold G. Dana, "New Haven, Old and New, unpublished scrapbooks in the archives of the New Haven Colony Historical Society, 114 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, Connecticut.

Interviews with John D. Hoag, Art Librarian, Chairman of the Standards Committee, The New Haven Preservation Trust, Art Library, Yale University, York Street, New Haven, Connecticut.
 2. Secondary and published sources:

The New Haven City Directory, 1840-1952, copies in the Yale University Library, the Public Library, the Town Clerk's office, and the library of the New Haven Colony Historical Society.

Prepared by Jonathan B. Conant
Research Assistant
National Park Service
August 31, 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Nineteenth century town house of three juxtaposed rectangles. House is stuccoed brick with wooden porch supported by wooden columns of Hindu derivation. There is a low square cupola in center of main block.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The extreme over-all dimensions are 60'-8" wide by 57'-8- $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep. The original block, before the addition on the north measures 30'-0", and consists of three bays. The house is 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ stories high, not including the basement which is above grade on the rear.
2. Foundations: The cellar wall is stone and brick with a facing of dressed ashlar stone on the exterior of the original block.
3. Wall construction: Brick exterior bearing walls, stuccoed with scored joints. Walls painted light buff.
4. Framing: Interior bearing stud walls; roof framing not visible in attic of original portion; roof framing of north addition consists of wooden beams and rafters.
5. Porches, stoops, etc.: Main entrance porch on east, three bays with steps at the north end bay, wooden floor and ceiling, wooden balustrade with wide railing, ornamental turned and carved wooden columns of Hindu derivation. Porch enclosed with wooden sheathing from deck to grade. Basement porch under library wing on south has brick pillars and floor. There is a wooden stoop on north leading to the sidewalk and a modern metal fire escape on the south exterior wall.
6. Chimneys: Three rectangular brick chimneys on main roof, one rectangular brick chimney on west wing.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: East entrance wooden door is set in masonry wall without ornamental trim. Two upper panels of five-paneled door are glazed in decorative etched glass. A pair of full length louvered shutters frame the doorway.

- b. Windows and shutters: East front, two full length double-hung windows with louvered shutters on ground floor. Eight-over-seven lights consist of large panes framed by narrow panes. Bay window in addition consists of three double-hung sashes; projection framed to wall by series of corbeled wooden moldings. South wall has three double-hung windows with louvered shutters, nine-over-seven lights of narrow and wide panes. West wall, paired library windows have sliding sash. There are also two round-headed windows one of which displays leaded stained glass. Except on east front, second story double-hung, six-over-six light windows are not vertically aligned with those below. Second story windows are shuttered. Attic windows have sliding sash which interrupts cornice. Cellar windows are double-hung.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Low pitched hipped roof covered with sheet metal painted red.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Wide overhanging eaves with wooden soffit; cornice corbeled brick stuccoed with applied band of wooden pendants shaped to form a trefoil void against the stucco.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: There is one dormer in the rear and two glazed skylights. A low square cupola is located in center of main block with flat roof supported by eight heavy scrolls, two at each corner. There are ten narrow arched windows on each wall of cupola.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: The main block entrance on Hillhouse Avenue has a deep vestibule and stair hall on north side of two main rooms which are connected by a doorway. Double glazed doors lead from rear room to library on west which leads to another room on the north. There is a pantry between this room and the stair hall. The wing which was added on the north contains two rooms and a rear stairway.
- b. Second floor: The second floor has been adapted to office space and seminar rooms. The attic is reached by a closed stairway of fifteen risers leading from the second floor hall. At the top of the attic stairs is an open well to the cupola. The attic over the main

portion of the house has been adapted for modern use and none of the roof framing is visible. The attic over the addition is unfinished so that the exterior of the original north wall of the house is visible, complete with corbeled cornice. There are traces of ornamental wooden trim at the eaves and indications of an original attic window which was bricked in.

2. Stairways: The main staircase on the north consists of a long straight flight of sixteen risers to a landing and three treads in the reverse direction. The bottom newel consists of a heavy "S" or scroll and handrail of smooth unmolded mahogany. The secondary stair is a stright flight with winders at the top. There is an enclosed flight to the attic, a rough painted steep flight from attic to cupola floor. Cupola floor is cantilevered balcony over the well on all sides. When additions were added to the house a small elevator shaft for single elevator was built on the rear near the back stairs.
3. Flooring: The floors of the main block of the house are one of the features of the interior. Each room has a different pattern of light and dark woods with intricately designed borders. Other floors are oak or modern vinyl tile.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster with paint finish on walls and ceilings. Flat panel treatment on ceilings on the two library rooms on the west.
5. Doorways and doors: Four-leaved wooden panel folding doors between foyer and stair hall. Double doors in library with transom light, glazed with etched and ruby glass in pattern of narrow and wide panes. There are also four-paneled wooden doors.
6. Decorative features and trim: Simple chair rail and picture molding and cornice in entry hall; picture molding and cornice in two main rooms of original block; simple door trim and plain unmolded baseboards in all rooms.
7. Notable hardware: Silver doorknobs and keyhole escutcheons on first floor.
8. Lighting: Modern electric fluorescent lighting.
9. Heating: Modern central heat. Fireplaces: Southeast room, first floor: Plain unornamented grey marble mantelpiece surrounding dark brown glazed tiles. Opening is trimmed with a brass rope motif. Hearth is of olive green and brown hexagonal tiles. Adjoining southwest room has white marble mantle with tile hearth. Northeast room, first

floor, has mantelpiece of slender wooden columns framing a green glazed tile facing. Room above has fireplace of buff glazed tile framed with simple wooden bead and shelf decorated with small dentils and bead motif.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: House faces Hillhouse Avenue on the east and Trumbull Avenue on the north. The land slopes to the southwest, dropping abruptly at the rear. The property is triangular. A single line of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad traverses the southerly side. Lot was originally bounded by the Farmington Canal as it crossed Hillhouse and Trumbull Avenues. The triangle was low marsh land lying along the canal bank and presumed unbuildable. The railroad bought the old canal and deepened the cut. The resultant fill raised the triangular lot four feet, making it suitable for erection of a dwelling.
2. Enclosures: The untrimmed boxwood garden of triangular shape in rear yard is enclosed with wooden fence on the railroad side and by a stone wall surmounted by a chain-link fence on the north.
3. Walks: Cement.
4. Landscaping: There are several large elms and other trees on the site.

Prepared by Woodrow W. Wilkins
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
July 1964

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records and six sheets of measured drawings were prepared as part of the Summer, 1964 New Haven Project, jointly undertaken by the HABS and the New Haven Preservation Trust, and financed by "Mission 66" funds of the National Park Service with assistance from the NHPT, following a 1963 HABS inventory survey of old New Haven carried out by the NHPT under the direction of Professor Christopher Tunnard of Yale University, President.

The project was under the direction of the Eastern Office of Design and Construction, James C. Massey, HABS Supervisory Architect, and was supervised by Architect Woodrow W. Wilkins, Professor of Architecture at the University of Kentucky, assisted by Ned Goode, Photographer, Frazier, Pennsylvania; Annette H. M. Gottschalk, William P. Hersey, and Charles R. Tichy, Student Assistant architects and students at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Yale University, and Iowa State University, respectively; and Jonathan B. Conant, Research Assistant and student at Yale University.